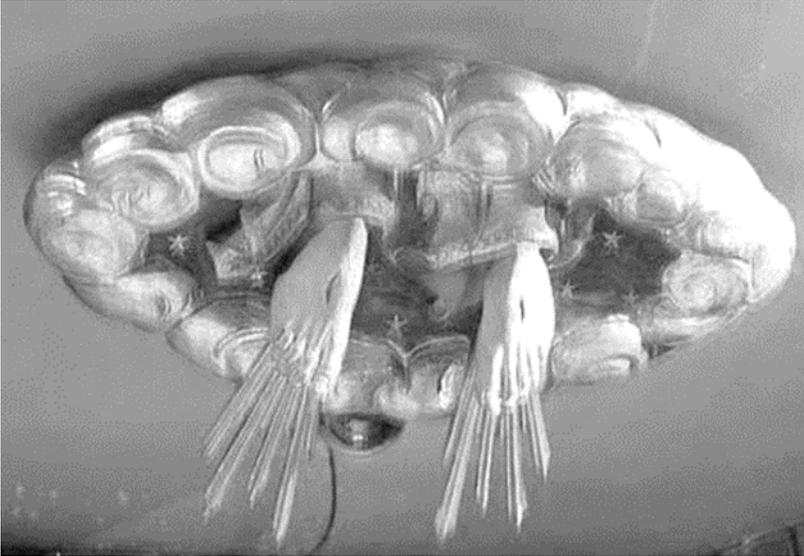


Ascension Reflections

Fr Tim McFarland, C.P.P.S.

Frequently homilies on the feast of the Ascension will use images from artists who have often stressed the physicality of the Ascension in their paintings and sculptures. Painters often painted the footprints left on the earth by the ascending Lord. There is an interesting painting on the ceiling of the Ascension chapel in the Anglican Church in Walsingham, England which has our Lord's feet poking through the ceiling of the chapel!



I think this image, while maybe a bit strange to us, speaks of the reality of the Ascension. Jesus, in human form, returns to heaven to be with the Father. This reinforces the Easter mystery of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Some in our times and certainly throughout Christian history, do not regard the body in the most positive light. What the Incarnation, Resurrection and Ascension emphasize is that our God has become one of us and our physical bodies have been redeemed and are capable of bearing the divine image.

The Ascension is the second of the two departures of the Lord. The first time He left His disciples was when He died on the cross. They were stunned. They were grief stricken.

Their hopes crashed. Their faith waned. They felt abandoned. Then He appeared to them in His resurrected body. Shortly after that He left them again. He ascended into heaven. This time the disciples did not grieve. Their hope and faith were stronger than ever. He left them to go to the Father so He and the Father could send them their Holy Spirit.

Jesus commands his disciples to, "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus challenges his disciples to proclaim the Good News of what God has done. We still have that same challenge some two thousand years later. The last sentence in unique to Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is with us always to the end. This is certainly a message of hope and promise for all times and people.

I found this little poem that expresses this challenge to us in a personal way.

*This you write a new page of the gospel each day,
through all that you do and whatever you say.
Others read what you write, be it faithful or true.
So, what is the gospel according to you?*

